Lingua Inglese 1

Lecture 3

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Searle's Contribution to the Theory

- In *Speech Acts. An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (1969), Searle puts forward his version of the so-called Speech Act theory

- He assumes the *speech act* as the basic minimal unit of linguistic communication, and he outlines a new structure for the speech act similar to Austin's, but with a focus on the propositional content

Searle's Contribution to the Theory (2)

- Performing a speech act means to perform at least 3 distinct acts
  - uttering words (morphemes, sentences) or performing *utterance acts*
  - referring and predicating, or performing *propositional acts*
  - stating, questioning, commanding, promising, etc., or performing *illocutionary acts*
- To these three notions, he adds Austin's notion of *perlocutionary act*, i.e. that concerning the consequences or effects that an act is supposed to have on the actions, thoughts or beliefs of the hearer.

Searle's Contribution to the Theory (3)

- "Speaking a language is engaging in a rule-governed form of behaviour" (Searle 1969:22) → talking is performing acts according to rules

- He proposes a characterisation of speech acts according to a set of regulative and constitutive rules

Regulative and Constitutive Rules: An Example

- A speaker **S**, who utters sentence **T** in the presence of a hearer **H**, and in the literal utterance of **T**, sincerely and non-defectively promises that **p** to **H**, if the following conditions are met:
  1. **Normal input and output conditions**, both **S** and **H** can speak the same language and there is no communication impediment
  2. ***S* expresses the proposition that *p* in the utterance of *T***
  3. ***In expressing p, S predicates a future act A of S (himself),*** i.e. one cannot make a promise about something already happen. A promise must be related to a future act

Regulative and Constitutive Rules: An Example (2)

  4. ***H would prefer S's doing A to his not doing, and S believes so.*** It concerns a crucial difference between a promise and a threat, since the latter refers to an act normally unwelcome from the point of view of the hearer

  5. ***It is not obvious to both S and H that S will do A under normal conditions***: one should not promise something that one is supposed to do under normal conditions

  6. ***S intends to do A:*** it has to do with the speaker's sincerity

Regulative and Constitutive Rules: An Example (3)

7. ***S intends that the utterance of p will place him under the obligation to perform A***

8. ***S intends to produce in H the knowledge that the utterance of T is to count as placing S under the obligation to do A***

9. ***The semantic rules of the dialect spoken by S and H are such that T is correctly and sincerely uttered, if and only if conditions 1-8 obtain***

Regulative and Constitutive Rules: An Example (4)

- According to the conditions stated above, Searle extracts a set of rules
  - *propositional content rule*, derived from conditions 2 and 3
  - *preparatory rule*, which is derived from conditions 4 and 5, and concerns the fact that the hearer would prefer the speaker's accomplishment of it to its non accomplishment, as well as the fact that the speaker's performing of the action should not be obvious under normal circumstances
  - *sincerity rule*, derived from condition 6
  - *essential rule*, derived from condition 7, and concerning the fact that the utterance of the promise counts as the undertaking of an obligation
  - Conditions 1, 8 and 9 do not specifically concern acts of promising, but are related to all sorts of illocutionary acts

Searle's Classification of Speech Acts

- **Representatives**: the speaker is committed in varying degrees to the truth of the expressed proposition, i.e. *affirm, believe, conclude, deny, report* etc.

- **Directives**: the speaker tries to get the hearer to do something, i.e. *ask, challenge, order, command, insist, request* etc.

- **Commissives**: the speaker is committed in varying degrees to a certain course of action, i.e. *promise, swear, vow, guarantee, pledge* etc.

Searle's Classification of Speech Acts (2)

- **Expressives**: the speaker expresses an attitude about a state of affairs, i.e. *apologize, thank, congratulate* etc.

- **Declarations**: They are represented by those acts which bring about something by declaring it to exist. The defining characteristic of this class is that the successful performance of one of its members brings about the correspondence between the propositional content and reality, i.e. *I resign, I baptize you, You're fired*

Differences in Illocutionary Acts

- Differences in illocutionary verbs is not all, since differences in illocutionary verbs do not necessarily mark differences in illocutionary acts

1. **Differences in the point or purpose of the type of act**
   - Attempt to get the hearer to do something/obligation undertaken by a speaker to do something
   - Illocutionary point is part but it is not the same as illocutionary force, i.e. the illocutionary point of a request is the same as that of a command (attempts to get the hearer to do something), but their illocutionary force is different

2. **Differences in the direction of fit between words and the world**
   - Words → World (statements, descriptions, explanations, assertions)
   - World → Words (requests, commands, vows, promises)
   - Some illocutions have as part of their illocutionary point to get the words (more precisely-their propositional content) to match the world

Differences in Illocutionary Acts (2)

3. **Differences in the expressed psychological states**
   - Beliefs (assertions, statements, explanations, declarations);
   - Intentions (promises,threats, vows);
   - Desire or want (requests, orders, commands, questions, prayers);
   - Pleasure (congratulations, welcomes)

4. **Force or Strength with which the Illocutionary point is presented**
   - *I suggest that we go to the movies* and *I insist that we go to the movies* have the same illocutionary point, but expressed with different strength.
   - Similarly for *I solemnly swear that Bill stole the money* and *I guess that Bill stole the money,*They refer to different degrees of commitment to the truth expressed

5. **Social status of speaker and hearer**

Differences in Illocutionary Acts (3)

6. **The way an utterance relates to the interests of the speaker or the hearer**
7. **The way an utterance relates to the rest of discourse**
   - Some performative expressions serve to link the utterance to the rest of discourse and the surrounding context: *I conclude*, *I reply*, *I object*
8. **Differences in propositional content determined by illocutionary force-indicating devices**
   - A prediction must be about the future, while a report about something in the past

Differences in Illocutionary Acts (4)

9. **Differences between those acts that must always speech acts, and those that need not be performed as speech acts**
   - Classifying, diagnosing, concluding
10. **Acts which require extra-linguistic institutions for their performance and those that do not**
    - Blessing, excommunicating, pronouncing guilty, declaring war
11. **Acts where the corresponding illocutionary verb has a performative use and those where it does not**
    - *State, promise, order, conclude* have performative uses
    - But one cannot perform acts of boasting or threatening by saying *'I hereby boast'*, or *'I hereby threaten'*
- **Difference in style**
  - *Announcing* and *confiding* need not involve any difference in illocutionary point, but only in the style of performance of the illocutionary act

Speech Acts: Examples

- **Representative/Assertive**
  - (I insist that) he is inadequate
- **Directive**
  - I advise you to meet and talk to him
  - Why don't you meet and talk to him?
- **Commissive**
  - I promise I'll do it
  - I'll do that, be sure
- **Expressive**
  - I congratulate you!
  - You're great!
- **Declarations**
  - I bet a hundred pounds he will marry her.
  - I declare the session open

Differences in Speech Acts

- **Representatives/Assertives** and **Expressives** are all intended to affect the addressee's mental states:
  - What they know and think (Assertives)
  - Their social attitudes (Expressives)
- **Directives** are designed to get others to do things
- **Commissives** and **Declarations** are contractual, establishing states of affairs in the world, with consequences for the addressees

Syntactic Properties of Illocutionary Acts

- Representatives: *I verb (that)+S*
  - ❑ I suggest that we go to the cinema
- Directives: *I verb you+you fut. vol. verb (NP) (Adv)*
  - ❑ I order you to go out
- Commissives: *I verb (you)+I fut. vol. verb (NP) (Adv)*
  - ❑ I promise you that I will come tomorrow
- Expressives: *I verb you+I/you VP* with a gerundive transformation
  - ❑ I apologize for disturbing you
- Declarations: *I verb you+NP be pred*
  - ❑ I appoint you chairman

Performative vs Descriptive

- I promise I'll be there
  Vs.
- I promised I'd be there
- She promises she'll be there

- INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS
- It's very cold in here
- Your cake must be very nice

- BLEND OF ILLOCUTIONARY FORCES
- What a lovely music!
- You're not telling me the truth
- It's too hot with that door closed

Austin vs. Searle's classifications

Austin	Searle
Verdictives (e.g. estimating, assessing, describing)	Assertives
Exercitives (ordering, appointing, advising)	Directives
Commissives (promising, betting)	Commissives
Behabitives (apologizing, congratulating, thanking)	Expressives
Expositives (arguing, insisting)	Declarations

Request

- Propositional Content
  - Future act (A) of addressee

- Preparatory Conditions
  - Addressee is able to do A. Speaker believes the addressee is able to do A.
  - It is not obvious that the addressee will do A of his own accord
- Sincerity Conditions
  - Speaker wants the addressee to do A

- Essential Conditions
  - The utterance counts as an attempt to get the addressee to do A
- Example: "Open the door, please!"

Request: Examples

- You'll join me there, won't you?

- Can you pass me the salt, please?
- Will you pass me the salt, please?
- Could you pass me the salt, please?

- I'd like you to join me there.

- Please, join me here.
- I feel so lonely, here.
- I miss you so much.
- What about joining me there?
- I'm sure you'd love being here with me.
- I'll come back, if you don't join me.

Question

- Propositional Content
  - Any proposition

- Preparatory Conditions
  - Speaker does not know the answer.
  - It is obvious that the addressee will provide the information, without being asked

- Sincerity Conditions
  - Speaker wants this information
- Essential Conditions
  - The utterance counts as an attempt to elicit this information from the addressee
- Examples: Is Peter coming? Who is coming?

Question: Alternative Ways

- What's the time?
- Who's coming?
- How long will you stay?
- What's the capital of New Zealand?

- I wonder who's coming
- I don't know who is coming

- Who's coming?
- It would be useful to know who is coming, if we have to cook a lunch for you all.
- I'm sure that you know who is coming.

Directives: Alternative Ways

- Rhetorical Questions
  - Isn't it time you treated yourself to a holiday?
  - Why not try a ClubMed vacation?
- Advice
  - You should experience the many delights of Wales
- Implicit Command or Advice
  - Our spa treatment is certainly worth trying
- Covered Command
  - For those who agree that doing nothing is the best form of relaxation, there's always a café in the sunshine

Directives: Use of Imperatives

- Come and see our beautiful lakes
- Let the sunshine in your heart. Come to bath.
- Eat a piece of our home-made cake in the historic French Café